

Guide to: using your Facebook profile for personal evangelism

WHY FACEBOOK IS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR EVANGELISM

Facebook is a widely used platform, with over 73% of internet users in the UK using it in 2020¹. Facebook has a very diverse user base so has a great opportunity for reaching people in your local area. This guide for those in our churches who already use Facebook provides tips on using this communication tool effectively for personal evangelism.

Note: Facebook changes at a rapid rate and this information is only accurate at the time of writing (summer 2020).

¹ www.wearesocial.com/uk/digital-2020-uk



USING YOUR FACEBOOK PROFILE FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM

A Facebook profile is created when you set up an account on Facebook as an individual. In the words of Facebook: “A profile is a place on Facebook where you can share information about yourself, such as your interests, photos, videos, current city and hometown.” It is designed for individuals in mind – it is for one person, where you can add other people as friends, and can choose to share personal information. Facebook accounts can be used by individuals and members of your church to share faith with their friends.

You may already use your Facebook account to stay in touch with friends and family, to share photos of your daily life, or for work purposes (such as if you are a minister or have a role in the church). Whatever your level of engagement on Facebook, you are probably already using it to communicate with a certain audience, but how could you be more intentional about using your Facebook profile for evangelism?

It is not clear cut and there isn't a line in the sand about what content is considered 'digital evangelism'. However, the spectrum below may help you to increase your effectiveness and give ideas of how you can make more of an impact with others. Through it all there is a need to build personal relationships and be authentic – we are not using Facebook to reach the whole world, just our friends and networks. If this seems daunting, consider this quote from the CPO booklet *Using Social Media for Evangelism*: “We fear a negative reaction, but are unlikely to receive one if we speak of our own experience with grace and with truth.”



These suggestions are not exclusive to each other, and you can of course share church events whilst including testimony, questions and endorsement in a single post (all of which might lead to a conversation in Facebook Messenger and an invite to attend church), but try to include more of the content to the right of the scale. So, if you usually share posts from your church Facebook page, try including a comment or a little text about why your friends might find it interesting or why it's important to you as a person of faith. We need Christians that engage at every level of this spectrum, but why not consider what you currently post and whether you want to try to take the next step?

HOW TO BE NON-THREATENING AND AUTHENTIC

Social media provides a space to start faith conversations in a non-threatening environment. For those who would find coming to a physical church daunting or unfamiliar, online tools give us an opportunity to go to them and engage in authentic and personal conversations and discussion. Digital evangelism is not about broadcasting random messages to the world and hoping someone will find it, but enables sharing our faith in highly personal ways with friends.

Be careful to avoid inundating your friends with Christian content – it is important that our personal accounts aren't solely used for digital evangelism as this can be off-putting to others. Our aim isn't to accuse others, but to post meaningful and engaging content that builds relationships with our Facebook friends who don't go to church. The key is to be authentic. Be authentic to who you are, your style and language, and how you would relate and talk to people in person.

"If we are perceived as trying to change or challenge someone else's narrative, we will get a hostile reaction. But if we share our own personal experience with authenticity, it might well get a respectful listen. Look for everyday miracles, stories of God at work and point to them (without hype or hyperbole). Share answers to prayer, or how you are dealing with a prayer that hasn't been answered." – Using Social Media for Evangelism (CPO)

Can your friends tell from your activity on Facebook that you are a Christian? As well as displaying this in what we post, there are other ways to show our faith on Facebook. Everything we do online represents our Christian faith, so we should consider how we interact with others and comment on other's posts. We can enter the story of others and look for opportunities to encourage and support others. We do not have to be able to answer every question, but be able to share God's love, such as by saying "I'll be praying for you."

Here are some examples to post on Facebook that are engaging and disarming:

- Going to church this morning at [tag your church Facebook page].
- Attended [example] Methodist Church this morning and had a great time. If any of my friends would like to come next week message me and we can go together ...
- I don't talk much about my faith normally, but this happened today ...
- This [song/film/other media] has had a real influence on my faith ...

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Even if very few of your non-Christian friends see or engage with your posts on your personal Facebook account, remember that you never know what impact you might be having. Don't measure 'success' in digital evangelism by the number of likes on your posts but remember that you could be planting the seed that will eventually flower. There is no real measure of 'success' with digital evangelism, and we do not necessarily seek to just bring more people to our physical church on a Sunday. Rather we hope to demonstrate a set of practices that enable us and others to enter the fullness of God's kingdom.